LETTER OF HERR EISENLOHR TO THE INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.

We have great pleasure in putting before our readers the following letter, embodying sentiments and views to which we can most cordially subscribe; it has been before us for some time to give publicity to Herr Eisenlohr's address; but wanton space has forbidden it. The paper was read on the occasion of his acknowledging his election as honorary and corresponding member of the Institute of British Architecture:—

"Honoured Sir,—On my return from a journey, I was agreeably surprised by the receipt of your much valued letter, announcing to me in so flattering a manner my election as an honorary and corresponding member of the Royal Institution of British Architects. My lengthened absence prevented me from immediately expressing my thanks, and acknowledging this unexpected pleasure: this kindness has given me, as well as the indulgent manner in which my works have been judged. When I consider how few are the buildings which I have as yet had the good fortune to erect, and feeling, as I do, that they require an indulgent criticism, and when, at the same time, I turn to your country, where such grand edifices are continually rising, my surprise is increased, and my pleasure augmented, by the honour conferred upon me. The highly esteemed members of your Institution have, in electing me, one of their professional brethren, an honorary and corresponding member, conferred upon me an honour which, although quite unexpected, I consider to be of inestimable value, for it gives me courage, and increases my confidence, urging me forward in the well-trodden path of our art. Such encouragement is of great advantage to the artist, but especially to the architect, who has often, in the execution of his work, great impediments and annoyances to overcome by patient perseverance.

"I shall esteem it a great honour to be more closely united with the Institute by the communication of any thing that may relate to the profession. Such an intercourse and reciprocity among the architects of different countries is much to be wished for at the present time, which is principally distinguished from all previous epochs in the history of architecture by the want of union. Attempts have been made for some time past to correct this, by imitations of the ancient Greek and Roman styles of architecture, and up to the present day many architects are repeating, with various degrees of talent and success, the attempt to introduce those styles into modern edifices, and some even, the imperfect conception of them called by the French *la Renaissance*. On the other hand, in many places in Germany a different course has been adopted, which, being partly suggested by the revival of a more Christian spirit, and partly by a patriotic feeling excited by the French revolution, is more inclined to the Christian architecture of the middle ages at home. These two principal divisions, each with its peculiarities, stand opposed to each other in Germany, and carry on, as it were, a contest in secret. But the present age is seeking something which does not yet exist—a kind of universal architecture. It seems to me that no immediate and direct imitation of any style of architecture already existing complete in itself, will lead to the desired result, as long as the present age demands its rights, and the existing state of society requires something arising from its own condition. When I also consider that in our art we have hitherto acted in a manner not sufficiently abstract, true, or scientific, and have imitated too much, although on the other hand it is not to be desired that we should disregard experience, we must have some point in history at which to begin, a root from which a new stem may shoot up to blossom from the present soil. It is also quite clear that here theory and history must go hand in hand, and it is only then that we can hope to attain that new, unprejudiced position, which in child-like innocence unconsciously existed at the commencement of all previous epochs of art. The peculiarity of our age, and indeed its problem, as regards architecture, as well as every other branch of art, consists in this,—how we ought to strive with manly simplicity and knowledge, so to speak, to attain that point from which art at former periods commenced in infancy its career. Where there is nothing but an empty and groundless adherence to forms, where architectural fallacy and pretension, or a certain coquetry is manifested, there an art of a peculiarly creative nature can never be expected.

"It is true that many grand buildings have been recently erected in the Roman, Grecian, and so called Byzantine and Gothic styles, and I may especially mention those at Munich. But they all want an enlivening principle, that of belonging to the present time, so that they are only silent records of bygone styles of architecture. In the same manner that we collect pictures of different schools in galleries, King Louis has collected buildings of all possible periods, and as they were not in Munich, and could not be transported there from other parts, he had them built, and thus made a grand collection of buildings, which are, however, still deficient in historical authority. If, therefore, we may draw a comparison, we must say that the modern collection of buildings at Munich is, as far as regards the arts, worth about as much as a picture gallery, containing a number of more or less successful copies from the different masters and schools. If it be true that the spirit of the times is faithfully expressed in its buildings, that the architecture of every period is, as it were, a fossilised history, future generations will say that the present age was utterly devoid of character. By an intimate acquaintance with the history of architecture, we have been provided with a vast quantity of subject-matter, which has hitherto quite overwhelmed us from its variety and quantity, so that we seem to be quite robbed of our senses. Of this we must first obtain the mastery, and then, impelled by a careful observation, as well as by an artistical and inventive spirit, regain our consciousness without at the same time suffering the experience obtained from history to remain useless. We must, on the one hand, investigate from a theoretical and scientific position, how far our architecture and its elements answer to the conditions of its purpose, of the building materials, climate, and so forth; and on the other hand, in looking back upon history, endeavour to find some period which presents constructions and forms similar to those which result from our abstract investigations, and thus a fruitful germ may be found for a modern, and in itself a harmonious style of architecture, a style which would gradually come into use, and supersede all the lifeless imitations and whimsical changes of fashion. In this, it appears to me, consists the great architectural problem of the present age, which can only be solved by united efforts. At such a period I esteem myself fortunate in having become an honorary member of your esteemed Institute, and I reserve to myself the pleasure of making further communications on this subject, if I have not already become tedious. The result of my endeavours hitherto, towards this end, have induced you to confer upon me the present honour, and you must therefore allow me occasionally to tax your patience. In conclusion, allow me to request you, Sir, to express these ideas and my thanks and esteem to the members of the Institute, and with the assurance of my great esteem for yourself and your worthy colleague, believe me, your most obedient servant.

"F. Eisenlohr."

OUR CORRESPONDENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

Sir,—Can you inform me, through the medium of your excellent journal, where I can procure a cheap but good covering for boarding? I am erecting some farm buildings, and am desirous of covering the same with some preparation; I object to tar, from its gloomy appearance and tendency to absorb the heat. I am aware of the existence of the "Antiputrescent Paint," but it comes too expensive to use to the extent I purpose.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A Subscriber.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

Sir,—In your paper of the 22nd ult. you express as follows:—"Mr. Tite is said to be likely to succeed to *the city district*, and Mr. John Stevens, son of Mr. Deputy Stevens, to *the western district*; but there are several* candidates in the field."

Allow me, Mr. Editor, to state that the expression "*city district*" is erroneous, and that the real state of the case is as follows:—

When the present Building Act of 14 Geo. 3, was framed, the city of London, *for purposes of the said Act*, was divided into four districts, and the appointment to the surveyorship of them was placed in the aldermen (as magistrates) only, and not in the corporation at large.

Latterly these four district surveyorships have been held by, respectively, Mr. William Mountague, (who had been appointed thereto some time previously to his succeeding the late Mr. Dance, as surveyor to the corporation of the city of London), Mr. George Smith, Mr. James Mountague, and Mr. E. Woodthorpe.

Some years ago, the surveyorship of the Bridge-house Estates (also in the gift of the corporation) was held by the late Mr. Swithin; but at the period of Mr. Dance's decease, the two surveyorships were united so as to form but one appointment, and the late Mr. William Mountague was elected to it; but whether, in future, this union will be continued is a point which, with others connected with what may be termed the city surveyorship, is, at the present time, under consideration of the committee specially appointed for that purpose.

Yours, &c. A Friend.

May 3rd, 1843.

* The decease of the late Mr. William Mountague has caused numerous candidates to start for his several appointments; in regard, however, to the election yesterday of a surveyor to *the western district*, two gentlemen only, namely, Mr. John Stevens (the successful candidate) and Mr. John Bull Gardiner, proceeded *so far* as to appear personally before the Court of Aldermen with their petitions.

We are glad to have all such matters as the foregoing put upon a right footing, and are greatly obliged to our correspondent. We may add that Mr. Stevens was elected to the vacant office in the surveyorship.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

Sir,—Lord Ellenborough once said on a building trial that the only merit possessed by the *present* Building Act (14 George 3, cap. 78.) was, that no person could understand it, and I need not tell you that it has been the custom of courts of law to set its provisions at nought; under these circumstances it was natural to expect that the bill now proposed would have provided for all these objections, and builders and owners of houses would have been protected against future legal uncertainties; but no! the proposed Bill leaves these disputed points in still more uncertainty than the existing Act.

The cases of *Watts* v. *Hawkins* (5 Taunton, p. 20) and the case of *Elliston* v. *Conyers* shew the construction courts of law put on the existing Building Act with respect to party-walls, and lights in party-walls; constructions which were not intended by that Act: hence a new Bill ought to set at rest, instead of slovenly gliding over them, all questions of this kind which may lead to litigation.

The late Mr. William Mountague, the city surveyor, and surveyor for the western city district, invariably refused to interfere in the setting out of party-walls and party-fence walls equally on the soil of each adjoining owner, or otherwise; alleging that it formed no part of his duty, and some serious instances of litigation have occurred in consequence of this refusal; one of which I am well assured is now depending in the House of Lords. The present Bill provides no remedy, as far as I can perceive, for the evil. Undoubtedly it is or ought to be the duty of a district surveyor to see to these matters, and the law upon these and several other points ought to be more defined. I trust that before the Bill passes into a law, an investigation will take place by examining men of practical experience before a committee of the House of Commons, and that the numerous objections to the Bill will be rectified.

I am, Sir, your constant reader,

London, May 8, 1843. An Architect.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

Sir,—During the last month several of the masons in this neighbourhood have received notes, inquiring whether they were willing to tender for the erection of a new parsonage house, intended to be erected at Rotherham, and on their answering in the affirmative, they received detailed schedules, with quantities attached, from Mr. Railton, architect under the ecclesiastical commissioners. The schedules comprised every department necessary to complete the house fit for occupancy, including bell and paper-hanging. The whole has the appearance of being well managed. The successful contractor only has to include the whole amount of charge and expenses for copies of plans, printed quantities, &c., in the amount of his contract, which each add in the amount of their tenders, as set out in the abstract of the schedules.

The guardians of the poor finding the poorhouse of the Sheffield Union too small for the proper accommodation of the inmates, have had designs and plans from two Sheffield architects (whose names I have not been able to hear, as the affair has been kept so close). I believe a set has been chosen and sent up to London for sanction.

On Monday evening, May 1st, F. Branson, Esq., M.D., delivered at the Cutlers' Hall, Sheffield, a lecture on English ecclesiastical architecture, before the members of the Church of England Instruction Society. The audience was very numerous, and comprised all the *élite* of the town and neighbourhood. The ladies evinced throughout the lecture a most lively feeling for the subject produced before them by the talented doctor, who began and entered into the component parts of the different styles, which are commonly classed as the Gothic style, describing the Saxon, Norman, early English, Decorated, and Perpendicular styles, each with their peculiarities, and laid the whole down so as to be understood by the most uninformed mind present, aided as the paper was by about fifty excellent drawings got up with considerable taste and care. At the end of the lecture a vote of thanks was given, amid great applause, to the worthy gentleman who had so well instructed and delighted his audience. Elvino.

Sheffield, May 2, 1843.

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